

Event Synopsis: 3rd Annual Well-being Symposium
The Fountains at The Washington House
May 25, 2005

Priority Issue #1: Physical Well-being

Physical well-being has been referred to as the cornerstone of wellness. It is almost impossible to tap into the other elements of wellness, and to create a sense of life-balance, without being well physically.

Barriers: Physical Well-being

The barriers to physical well-being are numerous. Several examples of barriers include:

- Lack of quality information surrounding health and nutritional issues
- Lack of access to preventive and health care services
- Physical limitations which hinder preventive activities, such as exercise
- Socio-economic and environmental conditions which may limit physical activity (i.e. inadequate finances for a health club membership, or unsafe neighborhoods that are not conducive to walking)
- Transportation and financial constraints

Proposed Solutions:

Many of the speakers at the 3rd Annual Well-being Symposium touched on issues related to physical well-being. A number of their suggestions are listed below:

- *Dr. Harry R. Moody suggested:*
 - Decreasing caloric intake, as it has been documented to increase longevity
 - Be active at any age, but especially as we age
 - Exercise not less than 3 days per week
 - Pedometers are encouraged to actively monitor how much walking is done per day
- *Donna C. Randall suggested*
 - People should focus on the portion size of high-fat/high-caloric foods being consumed, as opposed to eliminating them completely from one's diet
- *Betty Short, R.N. suggested*
 - Caregivers, or others dealing with a loved one who is ill, be mindful of their own physical and mental well-being. A caregiver who is not well will be unable to care for the loved one who is quite ill or incapacitated.

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Proposed solutions for physical well- being

- Lack of quality information addressed through open-door policies, informative printed information, informational sessions and discussion groups, and integrative educational techniques
- Appropriate fitness programming and dietetic consulting services with a registered dietician
- Fitness facilities and other health centers should accommodate older adults with health challenges and offer sliding scales if possible

Priority Issue #2: Social Engagement

Social well-being is another dimension of well-being, and research has shown the correlation between social interaction, mental and emotional health, and physical well-being.

Barriers: Social Engagement

Social interaction is an element of life that can bring a sense of completeness and enrichment to one's life. Relationships are often complex entities, however, and the barriers to healthy relationships are often difficult to understand and address. Several common barriers include:

- Clinical mental disorders
- Emotional issues (i.e. grief, feelings of isolation)
- Physical distress which may limit traveling, completing errands, etc.
- Medications that incite drowsiness, inability to drive, etc.
- Death of loved one
- Personality
- Care-giving/occupational responsibilities that limit personal time
- Lack of transportation, and/or limited driving ability
- Unavailability of appropriate social programming or senior centers

Proposed Solutions:

Several symposium speakers discussed the importance of social engagement, and how to remain engaged as we age.

- *Dr. Harry R. Moody recommended*
 - Older individuals begin working on their memoirs to the stories of their life experience survive them
 - Develop positive plans for the future and build strong relationships
 - Explore creativity later in life
 - Consider working (full-time or part-time) as a means of staying involved with friends, co-workers, and the community
 - Volunteer with an organization or cause that you feel strongly about.
Volunteering may encourage social ties as well as a feeling of productivity
- *Betty Short, R.N. recommended*
 - Individuals caring for loved ones should develop social support systems

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Proposed solutions for social engagement:

- Community outreach activities
- Partnerships with human service agencies
- Community transportation initiatives
- Support groups
- Intergenerational programming

Priority Issue #3: Planning Along the Lifespan

It is important to plan financially, occupationally, as well as for a quality of life as we age.

Barriers: Planning Along the Lifespan

- An aging workforce
- The current economic and sociological infrastructure is not equipped to deal with the growing number of older Americans.
- Paradigms of aging held by health professionals and American society, in general

Proposed Solutions: Planning Along the Lifespan

- *An attendee at the Mayor of Alexandria, Virginia's keynote session suggested:*
 - Public officials should do everything possible to reduce the tax burden on older adults
- *White House Conference on Aging Policy Committee Chair, Dorcas Hardy*
 - provided an overview of past conferences and emphasized how this year's gathering needed to focus on the coming retirement of 76 million baby boomers within the next 20 years.
- *An attendee of Ms. Hardy's session :*
 - recommended that the age at which people should be permitted to retire and collect Social Security be increased to age 70

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Proposed solutions for planning along the lifespan

- Quality of life planning and senior financial seminars
- Encouragement and logistical support for volunteer programs
- 'Wisdom Keeper' series to share career experiences and insight